



## Mountain Ridge Middle School

10590 Mountain Vista Ridge  
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126  
Principal: Kara Shepherd

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Mountain Ridge administrators and staff have worked hard to develop a culture of mathematics in the school. Teachers share a strong belief that all students can be successful in mathematics, and therefore place responsibility on students for accessing the supports they need to succeed. For the most part, students enter in seventh grade with well-developed mathematics skills.

- ◆ Middle (7–8)
- ◆ 83% White
- ◆ 7% Hispanic
- ◆ 7% Asian
- ◆ 2% Black
- ◆ 1% Native American
- ◆ 6% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Mathematics is taught at least five hours per week, in some teams on a block schedule with two days of 120 minutes and one day of 60 minutes. There are three levels of mathematics at every grade level so students can be placed in an appropriate level. The school uses a core program along with a variety of supplements and enhancements for demonstration, practice, and enrichment. Many models (physical models such as egg carton fractions and fraction bars as well as visuals such as grids) are used to teach fractions, decimals, and percents. Manipulatives of various sorts are used with students who need more concrete materials, and virtual manipulatives are available in computer labs.

Mountain Ridge teachers emphasize students knowing “why” not just “how.” Mathematics teacher: “We’ve really worked on developing really good questioning strategies. We’ve had a lot of coaching from our math coordinator in terms of making sure that we ask students what their thinking was, how they came up with an answer and to justify it, and rather than saying great job, that’s right and moving on, well, what do you think is the answer, do you agree, why do you agree, what could be another way of looking at that problem. And so the students really develop the confidence in their own answers as opposed to turning to the teacher for the confidence that they did it correctly.”

There are a number of types of formative assessments used to monitor student progress and guide instruction, from observations, asking questions during group work, listening to student explanations, projects, and paper-pencil. Teachers stress the value of collaboration: “We observe each other. We give each other feedback. We share data and discuss specific examples or specific units or lessons. We plan together a lot for instruction and for assessment. And so I really think one of the strengths of instruction in our building is the reflection the teachers put in and working together to improve.”